

**Excerpted from:**

*CRIMINAL JUSTICE CONSENSUS COST-BENEFIT WORKING GROUP FINAL REPORT*

Vermont Center for Justice Research

April, 2014

**VERMONT RESULTS FIRST MODEL:**

**THE BENNINGTON COUNTY INTEGRATED DOMESTIC VIOLENCE DOCKET PROJECT**

The Bennington County Integrated Domestic Violence Docket (IDVD) Project was initiated in September, 2007, as a special docket within the Bennington County Criminal/Family Division Courts. The goal of the IDVD project was to provide an immediate response to domestic violence events by coordinating Family and Criminal Division cases. Dedicated to the idea of *One Family, One Judge*, the IDVD Project was designed to allow a single judge, one day each week, to have immediate access to all relevant information regardless of the traditional docket and to gather all appropriate players at the table regardless of any traditionally limited roles. The IDVD Project focused on: 1) protection and safety for victims and their children as well as other family members; 2) providing immediate access to community services and resources for victims, their children, and offenders to help overcome the impact of prior domestic abuse and prevent future abuse; and 3) providing an immediate and effective response to non-compliance with court orders by offenders.

In December of 2011, the VCJR conducted an outcome evaluation of the IDVD<sup>1</sup> and determined that the IDVD Project appears to be a promising approach for reducing post-program recidivism among defendants convicted of domestic violence. In terms of all three recidivism measures used in this evaluation (reconviction for domestic violence, reconviction for a violent offense, and reconviction for any crime) the participants from the IDVD Project recidivated less frequently or at a comparable level than did participants in the District Court group or defendants in a statewide domestic assault cohort. The most substantial difference between the groups involved the percentage of defendants who recidivated based on a reconviction for any crime. In this case the percentage of participants in the IDVD Project who recidivated was approximately 25% lower and 54% less often than was the case for defendants in the statewide cohort.

When considering whether or not a program should be replicated an analysis of the post-program behavior of participants is a major factor to consider. Another consideration of importance is the cost-benefit ratio for a project. That is, a project might be extremely successful at reducing recidivism, but if the project is too costly to sustain replication may not be a wise fiscal recommendation.

One of the objectives of this cost-benefit initiative was to conduct a cost-benefit analysis of the IDVD Project using the Vermont Results First Model. Based on the effect size calculated for the IDVD Project by Steven Lize, one of the Pew Charitable Trusts consultants on the project, the analysis shows a total long-term benefit of \$1,856 per program participant. The average cost per offender is estimated to be

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.vcjr.org/reports/reportscrimjust/reports/idvdreport.html>

\$975. Other specialty courts in the Results First model have average costs in the area of \$1,200 per participant.

The benefit to cost ratio for the IDVD Project is \$1.90, indicating that the program is cost effective. More detailed breakdowns of these figures are discussed below:

**Benefits to Taxpayers: \$286 Per Offender**

The benefits are calculated from the marginal costs of the police, courts, prosecutors, defenders, and corrections resulting from the expected reduction in recidivism. This estimate represents the expected benefit from a single offender successfully completing the program and committing fewer crimes over a ten-year period.

**Benefit to Other Beneficiaries: \$1,570 Per Offender**

These are the benefits that are calculated from the tangible and intangible costs of crime for victims; sometimes also described as "Benefits to Society." Again, it represents the expected benefit from a single offender successfully completing the program and committing fewer crimes over a ten-year period.

**Total Benefits: \$1,856**

Total benefits include benefits to both taxpayers and victims.

**Average Cost per Participant: \$975**

Average costs for the IDVD Project were based on the costs associated with adjudicating probation violations for program participants, providing expanded supervision services, detention processing costs, and costs of detention.

**Benefits Minus Costs: \$881**

This figure represents the net benefits of the IDVD program per participant.

**Benefit to Cost Ratio: \$1.90**

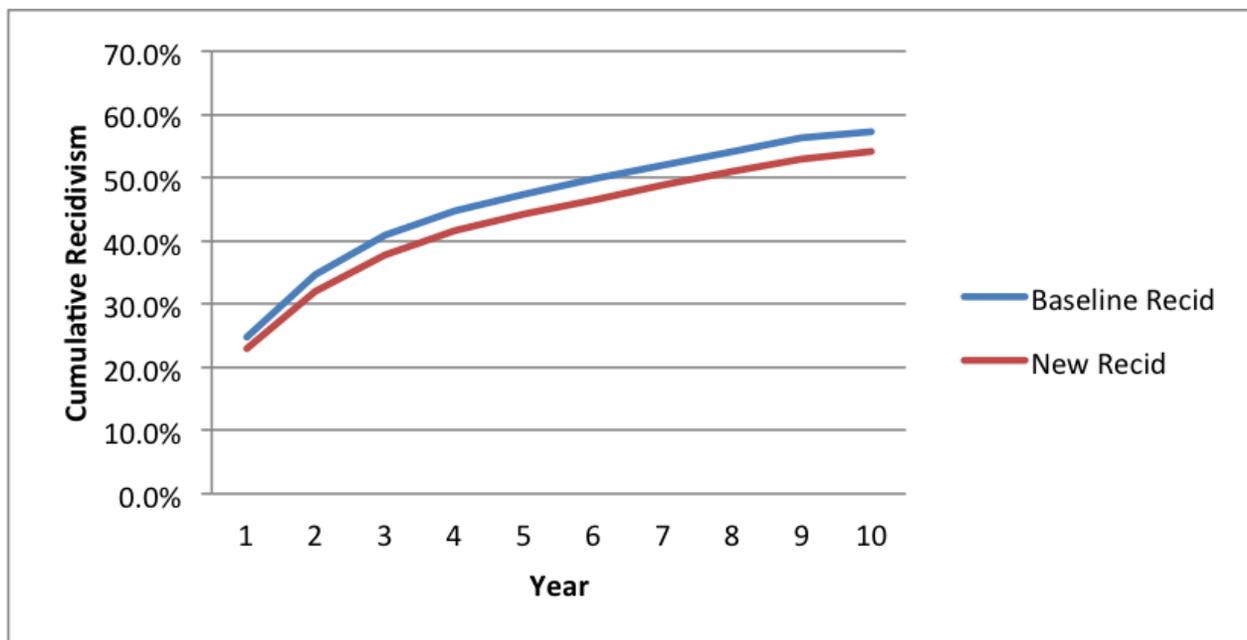
This figure indicates that for every \$1 dollar invested in the IDVD there is an expected benefit of \$1.90. Therefore, the IDVD program is cost effective.

Part of the process of estimating a return on investment involves assessing the riskiness of the estimates. Any rigorous modeling process, such as the one described here, involves many individual estimates and assumptions. Almost every step involves at least some level of uncertainty. The Results First model uses the “Monte Carlo” approach to model this uncertainty. The objective of the risk analysis is to assess the odds that an individual return on investment estimate may offer policy makers the wrong advice. For example, if we conclude that, on average, an investment in the IDVD Project has a ratio \$1.90 of benefits for each \$1 of cost, what are the odds, given the uncertainty in this estimate, that the program will not even generate one dollar of benefits for each dollar of cost? The Monte Carlo approach repeats the Vermont Results First model's calculations 1,000 times with random variations of the cost estimates, within a ten percent window. The Monte Carlo simulation has shown that the IDVD Project will statistically yield a positive net present value 58% of the time.

Figure 2 below shows the effect the program will have on recidivism over ten years. The blue line (top line) represents estimated recidivism rates for domestic violence offenders who do not participate in the IDVD program. The red line (bottom line) is the estimated recidivism rates for domestic violence offenders who successfully complete the IDVD program.

**Figure 2**

**IDVD PROGRAM EFFECT ON RECIDIVISM OVER 10 YEARS**



Based on the data presented in Figure 2 above the IDVD Project appears to be a cost-effective approach for reducing post-program recidivism among defendants convicted of domestic violence.